16

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

Pariſh-Church

OF

St. *JAMES Weſtminſter*,

ON

Wedneſday January 16. 17^{11}_{12}.

Being the Day appointed by Her MAJESTY for a General FAST, *&c.*

By *THOMAS HAYLEY*, A. M.
Præbendary of *Chicheſter.*

Publiſh'd at the Requeſt of ſome Gentlemen of the Veſtry, and others who heard it.

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PSALM LXXXI. 13, 14.

O that my People had hearkened unto me: and Iſrael had walked in my Ways!

I ſhould ſoon have ſubdued their Enemies, and turned my Hand againſt their Adverſaries.

THIS Pſalm begins with a ſolemn Invitation to the praiſing of God: But at the 8th Verſe, the Stile of it vary's, and God himſelf is there introduced thus expoſtulating with the *Iſraelites.*

Hear, O my People, and I will teſtify unto thee: O Iſrael, if thou wilt hearken unto me; Ver. 8. Ver. 9. *There ſhall no ſtrange God be in thee; neither ſhalt thou Worſhip any other God. I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt; open thy Mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Ver. 10.

In which Words he firſt puts them in Mind of that dutiful Allegiance they owed him, not only as their God, but as their Deli-

verer out of Bondage, whereby he had ranſomed them for himſelf: And then promiſes, that upon their Obedience he would fill them plentifully with all good Things.

But what Effect this had upon them we
Ver. 11. read at the 11th Verſe, *My People would not hearken to my Voice, and Iſrael would not obey me.* And the ſad Conſequence of this was,
Ver. 12. *That God gave them up unto their own Hearts Luſt, and let them follow their own Imaginations.* He withdrew from them his gracious Protection, and left them expoſed to the wild Extravagancies of their own Folly, and an eaſy Prey to the Malice of their Enemies.

Ver. 13. But *O*, ſays God, *That my People had hearkened unto me: and Iſrael had walked in my Ways!* He paſſionately bemoans their Stupidity, and their depriving themſelves of thoſe Bleſſings with which he would have crowned their Obedience. For if *that* had not been wanting, all the Fury of their Oppreſſors would have been turned upon
Ver. 14. themſelves; *I ſhould ſoon*, ſays God, *have ſubdued their Enemies, and turned my Hand*
Ver. 15. *againſt their Adverſaries. The haters of the Lord ſhould have ſubmitted themſelves unto him*, but his *own People* ſhould have been *eſtabliſhed, their time ſhould have endured for ever.* And he would have given them likewiſe plenty of all earthly Bleſſings, as it follows

follows at the 16th Verſe, *He ſhould have fed them alſo with the fineſt of the Wheat, and with Honey out of the Rock ſhould I have ſatisfied thee.*

How far this Paſſage of the Pſalmiſt is applicable to *this Nation*, and our *preſent Circumſtances*, I think I need not uſe many Words to demonſtrate. A common Underſtanding, with very little Obſervation, will be able to draw the Parallel between us.

If the *Jews* are here called *God's own People*, upon the Account of the many wonderful *Deliverances* God had wrought for them, and the miraculous Inſtances of his *Providence* over them, both in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and in ſetling them in *Canaan*. *We* of this Land may upon the *ſame Foundation* plead the *ſame Relation* to him; for neither has the *Number*, nor the *Greatneſs* of the *Mercies* we have received from him, been at all *Inferiour* to *theirs*. And if we examine into our *own Conduct*, I am afraid it will be found that we have made much the ſame ſort of *Returns* for them as *they did*; that we have been both forgetful of, and rebellious againſt, *God* the Author of them, and ſhamefully wanting in *Gratitude* to the glorious *Inſtruments* he made uſe of to convey them to us; that *We* have, like *Them, envyed Moſes in the Camp, and ſlighted Aaron the Saint of the Lord.* Pſal. 106. 16.

And

And what elſe can we reaſonably expect will be the *Effect* of ſuch daring *Provocations*, unleſs we ſpeedily repent of them, and amend our Behaviour for the future, but that *God* will inflict the *ſame Puniſhment* upon *Us* for theſe *Crimes*, as he did upon *them?* That he will withdraw that wonderful *Protection* he has hitherto vouchſafed us,

Pſal. 81. 12. *Give us over to our own Hearts Luſt, and let us follow our own wild Fancies, and vain Imaginations:* That he will at *preſent ſend leanneſs into our Souls*, and at *laſt* ſuffer our

Pſal. 106. 16.

Joh. 11. 48. *Enemies* ſo far to prevail againſt us, *That the ROMANS ſhall come, and take away both our Place and Nation.*

This is what the *Jews* have actually ſuffered for *their* Ingratitude and Diſobedience, and there are no Grounds to imagine *We* ſhall fare any otherwiſe, ſo long as the *ſame Sins* continue among us *equally notorious.* For we learn from the Words of the Pſalmiſt in this place, that the *Proſperity* of a Nation depends upon their being *Obedient to God*, and that the *Calamities* which at any time befall them, are but the Fruits of their *Diſobedience*, or a proper Puniſhment for it. For though God has a compaſſionate Love for all his Creatures, and is exceedingly deſirous of their Welfare, yet he cannot ſo favour them, as to indulge them

them in *Sin*, or diſpenſe with that *Duty* which they owe him.

In diſcourſing therefore upon the Words of my Text, I ſhall inſiſt chiefly upon theſe two Particulars, *viz.*

I. That Almighty God does earneſtly deſire the Happineſs of his People; which is implied in that pathetical Exclamation, *O that my People had hearkened unto me, that Iſrael had walked in my Ways!* Where God expreſſes a Deſire of his People's *Happineſs*, by his wiſhing that they had been *Dutiful* to him in order to deſerve it; for the only Reaſon why he deſires their *Obedience* is in order to their *Happineſs*. Secondly, I ſhall ſhew,

II. That notwithſtanding God does thus deſire the Happineſs of his People, yet their *own Obedience* muſt *qualify* them for it: 'Twas *then only* God would have made them *Proſperous*, if they had *hearkened unto Him, if they had walked in his Ways*. To which I ſhall add in the laſt place,

III. An Application of the whole to the preſent Occaſion.

I begin with the Firſt,

I. That

I. That Almighty God does earneſtly deſire the Happineſs of his People.

This is exactly agreeable to the natural Notions we have of God, who is *all Goodneſs*. He cannot *envy* his Creatures, becauſe he is perfectly happy in *Himſelf*, and every thing *they* have is derived from *Him*, who freely beſtows upon us all the good Things we enjoy. God does not delight in our Miſery, for there is no profit to Him in our Blood; nor does He at any time *willingly afflict the Children of Men*. He has no Deſign upon us but what is for our Advantage; no Intereſt to ſerve, no Affection to gratify, that is inconſiſtent with our Happineſs: But *hath pleaſure in the Proſperity of his Servants, and delight's to do us Good*. Every thing we ſee about us, may ſerve for an Argument to convince us of this; for what are all the good Things we enjoy, but the free Effects of his pure and diſintereſted Love, of his generous and undeſerved Bounty? 'Tis his Sun that warms and enlightens us, his Air that we breath in, and his Food that nouriſheth us. And as he has given us *Faculties* capable of Pleaſure and Satisfaction, ſo hath he furniſhed us with proper *Objects* to gratify them; nay, ſo perfect, and generous, and diſintereſted is his Goodneſs, that He diſpenſes theſe things even

Lam. 3. 33.

Pſal. 35. 27.

even to *thoſe that hate Him*, cauſing *his Sun to ſhine, and his Rain to deſcend, on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt*; and being *kind even to the Unthankful and Unholy.* Matt. 5. 45. Luk. 6. 3

And it is to be obſerved, that the *Scripture* always expreſſes it ſelf very *pathetically*, whenever it repreſents the Goodneſs of God to Mankind. Hence we find very frequently mention made of his *tender Mercies*, of his *Bowels of Compaſſion*, of the *Riches of his Goodneſs and Forbearance*, of his being *afflicted* and *grieved for our Sakes*, of his *repenting of the Evil* he was provoked to *Threaten*, and of his ardent Deſire that Men would rather forſake their Sins and avoid it. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the Death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways; for why will ye die, O Houſe of Iſral?* Pſal. 25. 6. 77. 9. 86. 15. Cant. 5. 4. Rom. 2. 4. Pſal. 78. 40. Exod. 32. 14. Ezek. 33. 11.

And this Love of God to Mankind is exemplifyed to us by the *deareſt of Human Affections*, by thoſe of *Parents* towards their *Children: As a Father pitieth his own Children*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *ſo is the Lord merciful to them that fear him.* Our Saviour expreſſes this very movingly in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. And how tender is that in the Prophet *Jeremy? Is Ephraim my dear Son, is he a pleaſant Child? for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him* Pſal. 103. 13. Jer. 31. 20.

ſtill; *Therefore my Bowels are troubled for him*; *I will ſurely have Mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.* And upon *Sion*'s complaint, that God had forſaken and forgotten her, he
i 49. 5, 16. ſaith, *Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe ſhould not have Compaſſion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the Palms of my Hands, thy Walls are continually before me.*

So very paſſionate and full of Affection is the Love of God towards Mankind repreſented to be in Scripture. But if to this it be objected, that God does many times ſuffer great Numbers of particular People, and even whole Nations, to lie under very ſevere Afflictions; that he brings upon them the great preſſures of *War*, and ſends the *Peſtilence* or *Famine* amongſt them, and even involves *good Men* in the common Calamities of their Country. It is to be anſwered, that theſe *particular* Acts of Severity, do not at all break in upon the *general* Love of God to Mankind, or take away his Compaſſion for them; theſe may be in a great Meaſure perhaps the natural Reſult and Conſequences of our own Actions, or however a fit Animadverſion upon them. God may ſee it *neceſſary* for us, to make us feel the ſmart of his Rod for a Seaſon; and if he *does ſo*, we ſhould not look upon his

Correction

Corrections as the effect of *Hatred*, but *Love*; *For whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth.* Heb. 12

If then the Mercies of God are ſo conſpicuous, as I have ſhewn, and his Bounty ſo large and free, even to his Enemies: If it be his peculiar Character that he is *gracious*, and the *Scripture* every where ſpeaks of him as *abundantly ſo*; we muſt then neceſſarily conclude with the Pſalmiſt, *That truly God is loving unto every Man, and that his Mercy is over all his Works. That he will not forget his People, neither will he forſake his Inheritance.* Pſal. 14 9. Pſal. 94 14.

This then we muſt lay down as a firm and undeniable *Truth*; and therefore whatever *Hardſhips* God ſuffers his Creatures to fall under, we muſt not thence infer, that he is *not merciful* to them; but that it is not in thoſe *Circumſtances* conſiſtent with his Wiſdom, his Juſtice, and his Holineſs, to be ſo gracious to them as he would *otherwiſe* be. For it is ſufficient that God will be as good to us as his *Wiſdom* and *Holineſs* will permit: A Goodneſs beyond this is neither *Honourable* for *God*, nor *reaſonable* to be expected by *Us*. Even we our ſelves have no great Opinion of what we call *good Nature*, if it be not under the Conduct of *Diſcretion*; and therefore we ſhould be very cautious, how we aſſert that of *Almighty God*, which is a great leſſening to the Cha-

racter of a *Man*. So that if we will but allow God to be *Wiſe*, and *Juſt*, and *Holy*, as well as Gracious and Merciful, the *Difficulties* that are objected againſt his *Goodneſs* will ſoon be at *an End*. For as to thoſe Miſeries Men complain of, that there are ſo many *unhappy Wretches* in the World; It is to be conſidered in the firſt place,

1. That a great many of thoſe things which *ſeem* Miſeries, are not *really ſo*; that Happineſs and Miſery, as to this World's Enjoyments, depend much upon the *Opinions* which Men have of things. And hence we find *ſome* Men very uneaſy to themſelves, and very *miſerable* therefore, in ſuch a Station, in which ſome *Others*, whoſe Minds have not been raiſed to higher Expectations, would enjoy themſelves very comfortably; Eſpecially if it be further conſidered,

2. That many of thoſe Evils which Men endure, are ſuch as tend to their *Advantage* in Matters of *far greater Concern*. They ſerve to take down their *Pride*, and *Ambition*, and *Coveteouſneſs*: And to bring them to that due Senſe of themſelves, which is neceſſary in order to their *true Happineſs*; by which means they ſerve as *Phyſick*, *Bitter* it may be, and unpleaſant to the *Taſt*, but *wholſome* to the *Patient*. And accordingly the Scripture tells us, that moſt of the Afflictions which

which befall Men in this World are designed for their *Benefit*, either for the Amendment and Reformation of *Bad* Men, or for the bettering and improving the *Good*, whose Graces are thereby exercised, and confirmed, and refined. And if it be no Objection to the kindness of a *Father*, that he corrects his Son in order to reclaim him from some evil Course; neither can it be any to the Goodness of *God*, though he makes use even of Severities to reduce his Children to that way which leads to their Eternal Welfare. For this World is but a State of Trial and Probation, the Judgments that are inflicted here are *not Final*, but only Pieces of Discipline, which will, if we are Wise, turn to our *Advantage*. But *Thirdly*,

3. As to the great Judgment of God, his *final* Condemnation of Sinners, which may seem inconsistent with his Goodness. This *would* indeed be a strong *Objection* against it, if it were inflicted on *innocent* Persons, but since none fall under it, but those who have first made themselves obnoxious to God's Justice, by a wicked Life, and a final Impenitency, it cannot argue a cruel Disposition, or a want of Love to Mankind. And since even in this Case, God does usually *wait long*, and invite Men, nay, earnestly intreat them, to prevent this *fatal Stroke*; what

what greater Argument can we have to ſhew us, that he delights not in the Death
2 Pet. 3. 9. even of *Sinners?* But that he is *Long-ſuffering to Us-wards, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance.*

This may ſuffice for evincing the Truth of my *firſt* Propoſition, *viz.* That *God* does really and earneſtly deſire that his People ſhould be *Happy.* I proceed now in the ſecond Place to ſhew,

II. That notwithſtanding God does thus deſire the Happineſs of his People, yet their *own Obedience* muſt qualify them for it. And this depends upon theſe two Reaſons. (1.) Becauſe the moſt effectual Way for any Nation to be *Proſperous*, is to engage *God's Providence* in their Favour. (2.) Becauſe the *walking in his Ways* is the *only Method* they can take to *procure it.* And,

1. The *Providence of God* is the great and only Security of a Nations *Proſperity.* This is plain from God's *Omnipotence*, whereby he is enabled to diſpoſe of all things both in Heaven and Earth, exactly agreeable to his *own Mind.* The force of *ſecond Cauſes* can ſignify *nothing* without *his Bleſſing*, and
Eccles. 9. 11. therefore *the Race is not always to the Swift nor the Battle to the Strong*, but only when it pleaſes *him* to give them *Succeſs:* So that whatever

whatever Efficacy they may *otherwiſe* have, they can never prevail to the hindring any of *his Deſigns*; for though there be *many Devices in the Heart of Man, yet the Counſel of the Lord that alone ſhall ſtand.* Prov. 19. 21.

Politicians may ſet their Wits upon the Rack to contrive *Methods*, but they muſt ask *God*'s leave whether they ſhall *proſper*. They may pleaſe themſelves with reflecting upon a *well-laid Deſign*, yet ſtill without *Providence* 'tis liable to be *Blaſted*; for all Humane Affairs are ſo liable to ſuddain and unexpected Alterations, and the *leaſt Change* is many times of ſuch *vaſt Conſequence*, even in Matters of the *greateſt Moment*, that 'tis but Folly for *Man* to contrive, unleſs his Contrivances are forwarded and influenced by *Him*, at whoſe *Command*, and in whoſe *Sight*, are all thoſe *hidden Cauſes* which ſo much intangle our Affairs. But though it be ſo deſirable a thing to have the Divine Providence on our ſide, we muſt remember in the ſecond place,

2. That there is *no other way* to *obtain* God's Favour, but by *Obedience* to his Laws; we muſt *hearken unto Him*, and *walk in his Ways*. God who is a Being of infinite Purity and Holineſs, can never take Delight in favouring thoſe who are utterly unlike him, who have no Pleaſure in any thing, but what his Nature abhors. The Scripture

ture is not in any Point more plain than in this. That *God is of purer Eyes then to behold Iniquity*; That *the way therefore of the Ungodly ſhall Periſh*, and that the *end of Sinners* is, they ſhall be *rooted out*. There is no way to reconcile *God's Favour* with *ſinful Courſes*; the outward *Proſperity* of *wicked Men*, is no Argument for it. This ſhews indeed that God is *merciful*, in that he does not execute Judgment upon them *ſpeedily*; but it does not prove, that they are therefore his *Favourites*, for his Judgments tho' *ſlow*, do at *length* overtake them. Almighty God may ſometimes think fit to make a *ſinful* People the Inſtruments of his Vengeance, and proſper *one wicked* Nation for the Puniſhment of *another*; yet then, he will at *laſt* caſt away even theſe his *Rods* from him, when once they have accompliſhed that Work which he purpoſed by them. So that, though God may compaſſionately *forbear* Sinners a while, yet *Juſtice* muſt take place at length, if there be *no Reformation*. He may have Mercy in ſtore for the *Amendment* of a wicked People, but there can be none for their *Portion*, whilſt they continue *Wicked*. All his gracious *Promiſes* are made only to the *Good* and *Obedient*, but to Sinners no further then as by their Repentance they return to their *Duty*.

Hab. 1. 13
Pſal. 37. 39.

Would

Would we therefore make our *Obedience to God* our firſt and principal Care; would we *begin* all our great Attempts in *his Name*, and carry them on by ſuch *Methods* as are agreeable to *his Will*; would we make it the *End* of all our Undertakings, to promote *his Honour*, and the *Good of Mankind*; our work would then *proſper* in our Hands. God would then eſpouſe *our* Cauſe as his *own*, and we ſhould *tread down our Enemies under us*, and be *delivered from the Hands of all that hate us*. Pſal. 108. 13. Pſal. 69. 14.

But if Men will aim at *Ends Repugnant* to the *Will of God*, ſuch as the Oppreſſion of *good Men*, the Eſtabliſhment of *Error* and *Idolatry*, and the depriving Mankind of their *natural* Liberties, as well as their *Civil* ones: And if to compaſs theſe Ends, they ſhall make uſe of ſuch *Means*, and engage in ſuch *Methods*, as are as *ſhameful* and *diſhonourable* as the very *Ends themſelves*; It is *juſt* with *God* to *blaſt* ſuch wicked Deſigns, and to bring ſuch *mighty Sinners* to be covered with *ſhame here*, and to be *mightily tormented hereafter*.

But *when a Man's ways pleaſe the Lord*, ſays *Solomon*, *He maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him*; either he will make his Enemies to *ceaſe* their evil Machinations againſt him, or he will make them *repent* their being his *Enemies*. So that ſuch a one Prov. 16. 7.

need not be *afraid* of any Event, becauſe he is aſſured, that he hath both a *Friendly*, and an *Almighty* Hand to protect him: And
Pſal. 144. 5. *happy then are they who are in ſuch a Caſe, yea, bleſſed are the People who have the Lord for their God.*

The *Summ* then of what has been ſaid is this. That *Almighty God* does earneſtly deſire the *Happineſs* of *all Mankind*; that the only way for *any People* to ſecure to themſelves *his Favour*, is to be very ſtrict in *keeping his Commandments*, to be conſtant in the publick Exerciſes of Religion, and to be ſincere in the Practice of it. We muſt *hearken* unto the Voice of *God's Word*, and *walk* in the *way of his Commandments*; and then *God himſelf* will preſide over our *Coun-*
Pſal. 105. 22. *ſels*, and *teach our Senators Wiſdom*, and will
2 Chron. 32. 8. *go out likewiſe with our Hoſts, and Fight our Battles.* And thus by having the *Divine*
Deut. 32. 30. *Preſence* amongſt us, *One of us ſhall chaſe a Thouſand, and two, put ten Thouſand to Flight.*

Having thus conſidered the two main Parts of my Text, it remains in the laſt place,

III. That I make ſome Application from the whole to the *preſent Occaſion*, and ſo conclude.

We

We are here met together, in Obedience to Her *Majeſties* Command, to implore the *Bleſſing* of Almighty God upon the *Conſultations* that are now on Foot for the Eſtabliſhment of a *General Peace*; that both *We* and all our *Allies* may obtain that *Security* from the Oppreſſion of *Tyranny* and *Arbitrary Power*, which has been the great *End* aimed at by our engaging in this Bloody and Expenſive, yet Juſt and Neceſſary *War*: But if this Security cannot be obtained by *Treaty*, that God would then be pleaſed to continue to favour our *Arms*, till we can by *Force command it.*

The Divine Providence has hitherto wonderfully proſpered the *Means* that have been made uſe of to compaſs it, and by repeated and amazing *Victories* given us ſuch a *near* proſpect of Succeſs, that nothing ſeems capable of preventing it, unleſs it be our *own Impatience.* But if we have not *Faith* enough to *wait on God*, and to *tarry the* Pſal. 27. *Lord's leiſure*, even whilſt we ſee his Hand 14. *viſibly* working, I had almoſt ſaid *miraculouſly*, on our Behalf; 'tis but *Juſt* in him to puniſh our Infidelity and Perverſeneſs, by turning to our *Diſadvantage* and *Ruine*, even what he has *already* done in our *Favour*, and ſo to make our *Succeſſes be unto us an occaſion of falling.*

The *Jews*, of whoſe ungovernable Temper God ſo affectionately complains in my Text, were juſt ſuch another *ſtubborn* and *untractable* Generation of Men, as *we are*. And there is *one particular* and *provoking* Inſtance of their Conduct, which we find recorded in Holy Scripture, as a mark of *Shame* and *Reproach* upon *them*, and *God's Puniſhment* upon them for it, may be a *Caution* to *all other Nations*, to *avoid* the *like Courſe* of Behaviour, whenever Providence places them in the *ſame Circumſtances*. You may find it in the 13th and 14th Chapters of the Book of *Numbers*.

There we have an Account, that after God had delivered the *Iſraelites* from their *Egyptian Bondage*, *dried up the Red-Sea* before them, that they *might go through the Deep*, *as through a Wilderneſs*, and *miraculouſly* ſupported them, both with *Manna* and *Quails*, till he had brought them to the very *Borders* of the *Land of Canaan*, the place deſigned for their *Reſt* and *Settlement*: Yet even THEN and THERE, when their *greateſt Difficulties* were conquered, and they had nothing more in a manner to do, but to *take Poſſeſſion* of the Land of their Inheritance, their *Faith* and their *Courage* failed them. And inſtead of *joining manfully* with *Moſes*, the *Captain of the Lord's People*, in order to *diſpoſſeſs* the *Idolatrous Nations*, and

ſal. 106.

and perfect their *own Settlement*, they hearkened to the SPIES which were *choſen out of every Tribe* to go and ſearch the Land, and to take an Account of the Inhabitants; who, upon their return, brought a *falſe* and *evil Report*, and *diſheartened* the *Congregation of Iſrael*. *The Land*, ſaid they, *through which we have gone to ſearch it, is a Land that eateth up the Inhabitants thereof, and all the People that we ſaw in it, are Men of great Stature. And there we ſaw the Giants, the Sons of Anak, which come of the Giants; and we were in our own ſight as Graſhoppers, and ſo we were in their Sight. We are not able to go up againſt the People, they are ſtronger then we.* Numb. 13. 32. Ver. 33. Ver. 31.

A *ſhameful* piece of *Cowardiſe* and *Puſillanimity* this! In Men that neither wanted *Numbers*, for they were *ſix hundred Thouſand Footmen*, nor *former Succeſſes* to animate and encourage them. But however we find it had the *deſired Effect* upon the *People*, who were *diſpirited* by it; for 'tis ſaid, *they wept that Night*, and *murmured againſt Moſes and againſt Aaron*, ſaying, *Would God that we had died in the Land of Egypt, or would God we had died in the Wilderneſs: And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this Land, to fall by the Sword, that our Wives and our Children ſhould be a Prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?* Numb. 11. 21. Numb. 14. 1, 2. Ver. 3.

And

And upon this they resolved to *change* their *Commander*; for it follows at the next Verse,

Ver. 4. *And they said one to another, let us make a Captain*, not to lead them on to take Possession of the *promised Land*, but to carry them back into BONDAGE, for so it follows, *and let us return into Egypt.*

Upon this *surprizing* Emergency, some of the *Wisest* of them, who were of a *warm*

Ver. 6. Complexion, as *Joshua the Son of Nun, and Caleb the Son of Jephunneh, rent their Cloaths*, to express their Indignation at their *Stupidity*. But the *calm and meek Moses*, and the *devout and holy Aaron*, examples for all good Men to imitate under such National Defe-

Ver. 5. ctions, *fell on their Faces before all the Assembly of the Congregation of the Children of Israel*, and implored the Mercy of *God*, that he

Ver. 19. would *pardon the Iniquity of his People*, and not send upon them that *swift* and *immediate* Destruction which he designed, and which their Provocations deserved. But though *these two Holy Men* interceded for them, they could obtain no other *mitigation* of their *Punishment*, but the *exchanging* that *immediate* Destruction, which they deserved, into the *putting off* their Settlement in the promised Land for *forty Years*. During

Ver. 29. which time, the *Carcasses of that present Generation of People fell in the Wilderness*; But as

as to the *Men which Moſes ſent to ſearch the Land, who returned, and made all the Congregation to murmur againſt him, by bringing up a ſlander upon the Land*; *Even thoſe Men that did bring up an evil Report upon the Land, died inſtantly by the Plague before the Lord.* Ver. 36. Ver. 37.

This piece of *ſacred Hiſtory* I thought would not be an improper Subject for your *preſent Meditations*, though I ſhall not treſpaſs upon your *Patience* ſo long as to make its *particular Application*. The *general Doctrine* we learn from it is very *obvious*, that *God* is always inclined to *proſper* whatever Nation is *Obedient* to him; and that they are our *Sins* only that make us *miſerable*. And what *Inferences* ſhould we draw from hence, but ſuch as theſe, *viz.*

1. That ſince Almighty God is ſo exceedingly deſirous of his People's Welfare, *this Love* which he expreſſes ſo tenderly towards *Us*, ought to beget in us a *reciprocal Love* towards *Him*. 'Tis the Nature of Love to do ſo in generous Minds; and there is no baſeneſs ſo great, as that of abuſing Mercy and Love, and returning Evil for Good. If we will not ſee the Methods which *God* has chalked out to us, in order to obtain and ſecure our true Felicity, before it be *too late*, it will be a tormenting Reflection, when

when we come to *ſmart* for our Stupidity, to think that 'twas purely owing to our *own Folly*; ſince the God with whom we had to do, was not only extreamly deſirous we ſhould be Happy, but did likewiſe earneſtly intreat us, and affectionately endeavour to make us ſo.

Let us not then tire out the Patience and Forbearance of our Heavenly Father with our Ingratitude and Rebellion; but let us *caſt off* thoſe *Sins* and *Impieties* which *ſeparate* us from the *Love* of our Maker. Let us
Joel 2. 12. *turn unto the Lord with all our Hearts, with Faſting, and with Weeping, and with Mourn-*
Rom. 2. 4. *ing*, and not too long *abuſe* the *Riches of his*
Pſal. 130. *Goodneſs and Forbearance. There is Mercy*
4. *with God, therefore ſhould he be feared.* 'Tis an *inference* which the *Scripture it ſelf* makes, from the conſideration of God's *Goodneſs*, which will be the *more terrible*, if we do by our Tranſgreſſions provoke him to turn it into *Wrath*. We of *this Nation* have had ſufficient Experience of the Goodneſs and Mercy of God towards us. His *Judgments* have not hitherto fallen ſo heavy upon *Us*, as they have upon other of our *neighbouring Nations*; for though we have born the *Burden* of War in *common* with *them*, yet we have not felt the *Miſeries* and the *Calamities* of it, which nothing but our *Sins* is likely

likely to bring *home to Us.* It is ſaid, *That when God's Judgments are abroad in the World, the Inhabitants of the Earth will learn Righteouſneſs.* Pity! that Men will not make a better uſe of his *Mercies*, and prevent his ſending *Judgments* to reclaim them; but if we will not reform our Lives, by obſerving the ſtroke of God's Hand upon *others*, we make it neceſſary that we ſhould at laſt feel it *our ſelves.* And therefore, Iſai. 2

2. If the Love of *God* have no force to perſwade us, if we are ſo *ſelfiſh* as not to obey him for his *Mercies ſake*; yet even for that very Reaſon, becauſe we are *ſelfiſh*, the love of *our ſelves* might prevail, and we might do it for our *own ſakes.* I have ſhewn that to be *Dutiful* and *Obedient*, is the only way to make a People *Happy*; and you ſee therefore, wherein the *true Intereſt* of our Nation does conſiſt; not ſo much in *increaſing* its *Strength*, and *fortifying* its *Walls*, as in *weakening* our *Luſts*, and *demoliſhing* the *Strong-holds of Sin.* *This* is the Method we muſt take, if ever we expect that *God* ſhould be *gracious to our Sion, and build up the Walls of our Jeruſalem.* Pſal. 51. 18.

Where then are thoſe *Patriots*, thoſe generous Minds, who are ready to profeſs their *Zeal* for their *Country?* Here lies the Way before them; not ſo much to ſacrifice their

Lives and Fortunes, tho' poſſibly even *this* may ſometimes bs *neceſſary*, as their *ſinful Luſts*, and *vicious Affections* in it's Service. By theſe Methods we may *all* become *Benefactors* to our *Country*: *Every Man* may in ſome Degree help to procure *God's Favour*, and draw down the *Bleſſings of Heaven*. Let us all therefore ſincerely endeavour, firſt to reform our *own Lives*, and then to promote the Reformation of *others*. Let us by our Prayers, Admonitions, and Examples, do our utmoſt to cleanſe this our Land from all that *ſhameful* and *daring Impiety* that defiles it, and call's loud for *Vengeance*. And when we have once accompliſh'd this *great*, this *deſirable*, this *neceſſary* Work, we may then have ſome Grounds to hope in *God's Protection*, that he will either proſper our preſent *Negotiations* to the concluding a *ſafe* and *honourable Peace*, or that he will continue thoſe *glorious Succeſſes* and *triumphant Victories* to the *Confederate Arms*, 'till our *own Safety*, and the *Liberties of Europe* ſhall be eſtabliſh'd.

But let us not be ſo vain, as to think that *Worldly Wiſdom* or *Worldly Strength* will do this, if we neglect the *Wiſdom of ſerving God*, and deſpiſe the *Strength* we might have in the *Rock of our Salvation*. We know not indeed how far God *may* proſper us, tho' we

Pſal. 89. 26.

we *be wicked*, ſince he is rich in Mercy, and does often *ſpare* thoſe who *deſerve Puniſhment:* But how long he *will* do this, we know not, and 'tis *Preſumption* to *hope* we know not *why*. So that the only ſure and ready way to be *proſperous*, is, to *break off* Dan. 4. 27
our Sins by Repentance, *and our Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor*, to humble our Hearts before God, every one for his *own Sins*, and every one alſo for the *Sins of others*. Then will the Lord be *jealous for his People*, *and gracious to his Inheritance*; then will he *indeed ſubdue our Enemies*, *and turn his Hand againſt our Adverſaries*; then may we *rationally* hope for *Deliverance* from the *Calamities* of *War*, for *Eſtabliſhment*, *Security*, and *Peace:* And may further have a Proſpect of, that which exceeds all *Temporal* Happineſs, the entring into a State of *Eternal Peace* in *another World*; which God grant we may all do, through the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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